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ART. III.—*History of the Protestant Church in Hungary, from the Beginning of the Reformation to 1850. With Special Reference to Transylvania.* Translated by Rev. J. CRAIG, D. D., Hamburg. With an Introduction by J. H. MERLE D'AUBIGNÉ, D. D. Boston: Phillips, Sampson, & Co. 1854. 12mo. pp. 559.

It seems impossible at any one epoch to believe that the history of the past can be repeated. Each people seems to itself an exception. Every revolution to the actors is an entirely new event, separate from the current of the world's progress. Present causes working in the history of nations or religions never appear like past causes. An American can seldom see in the influence of slavery on agriculture or morals in this country anything analogous to the influence of slavery in Italy eighteen centuries ago. The oppressors of the Scotch Dissenters under Claverhouse never thought that they were enacting the same tragedy which had been played under Alva in Holland. The burners of Servetus in Geneva would have been the last to suppose that they were scattering with the ashes of the heretic the same seeds of indifference, scepticism, and spiritual pride in their own Church, which the inquisitors of Charles V. were then so freely planting in Italy and Spain through the Roman Church. The student of history, however, sees these things differently. He finds man the same in every age. With varying costume and changing scenery, he beholds the same grand principles working for good or for evil in each period of the world. The popular vices of the day are not with him merely temporary frailties; they carry with them the stern retribution of a coming time. The oppressions, the wrongs, of the present, are not spectacles or pathetic scenes passing before him for artistic contemplation; they are solemn glimpses granted him of the great plan of Providence, prophetic of fearful penalty and suffering for the future.

It is with such emotions that every right-minded and reflecting man must regard the silent drama of religious oppression now so fearfully progressing in Hungary.

The indifference or ignorance of our people to these momentous events, we can explain only from the general want of knowledge in regard to the Protestant Church of Hungary, and the little trustworthy information which reaches our press with reference to that much suffering nation. We propose, so far as it can be done within the brief limits of this article, to exhibit the proceedings of the Roman Catholic Church in that country,—proceedings fraught with manifold and far-reaching dangers to the cause of liberty and spiritual religion in Eastern Europe.

The Protestant Church of Hungary has had the true discipline for a Church; it has been nurtured in persecutions; its privileges have grown out of its struggles; its history has been that of difficulty, toil, contest, and bloodshed. It professed faith in a pure, self-governing Christianity, when such confession brought with it disgrace in public life, loss and imprisonment in private, and even execution on the scaffold or labor in the galleys.

Many of the principles of the Reformation were diffused in Hungary a hundred years before the time of Luther, by the Waldenses and the followers of Huss. According to a statement made by an early Pope, the doctrines of these Pre-Reformers were somewhat as follows:—

“The Pope of Rome is nothing more than any other bishop. Not the ordination, but the holy life, makes the priest. There is no purgatory. It is a device of priestly avarice, and a useless thing, to pray for the dead. All pictures of the Divine Being and of the saints should be abolished. The consecrating of water is ridiculous. Confirmation and extreme unction are no sacraments. The confessional is mere child’s play. Prayer to the saints in heaven with Christ is useless. The religion of the begging monks is an invention of Satan. Every man has a right to preach the Gospel.”

Such principles, advanced a hundred years before the Reformation, furnished a basis for the reform-movement in Hungary. Other causes were added. Owing to the independent municipal constitution of the country, the Pope and his officers had never been able to carry the influence of the Roman Church so unresistingly through the provinces as in other parts of Europe. The nobles, too, were jealous

of the bishops and the higher clergy. By a singular fatality, the Hungarians were indebted for the greatest blessing of that age, toleration, as their revolutionary leaders have been for the greatest benefit in this age, to the Turks. The battle of Mohacs, which in 1524 utterly prostrated Hungary before the Ottoman power, preserved the germs of a free Christianity for the reviving influences of Luther's doctrines. Under the Turks neither Austria nor Rome could persecute the nascent Protestantism. In the year 1556 the power of the Roman Church, under the advance of free ideas, virtually ceased in the most important province of Hungary, Transylvania. Five years later, the Jesuits were first introduced; and seventeen years later, a formal separation took place on the part of the adherents of the new doctrines from the Roman Catholic Church. In 1588, the Jesuits were utterly banished. From that time the persecuting measures of the Austrian Romanist officials were pushed to the utmost extreme, and an Austrian Emperor succeeded in carrying through the Hungarian parliament a law by which any heretic might be delivered up to the old punishments provided by a cruel legislature against religious dissent.

The first effect of this legislation was to arouse such an outbreak, that a prince of Transylvania, taking advantage of it, almost succeeded in detaching a large part of Hungary from the Austrian Empire. The ministry were compelled in alarm to grant to the Protestant Church its first great guaranty, the Treaty of 1606, by which the free exercise of religion was allowed to all the middle and upper classes, and the right of petitioning was reaffirmed to the Protestants. This "Peace of Vienna" was reckoned one of the great pillars of the Protestant constitution. Other attacks, however, soon followed. Ferdinand II. ascended the throne, — a man of the nature of Philip II. of Spain, who could say that he "would rather have a kingdom ruined than heretical." Attacks and insults were heaped on the unfortunate Protestants. In 1624, it was estimated that twelve hundred useful citizens and industrious inhabitants were in exile from Hungary for their faith alone. The disturbances which resulted again called in a prince of Transylvania to the aid of the

oppressed people, and a new treaty was won from the Austrian ministry,—the Treaty of Linz, in 1645,—the second great guaranty of Protestant rights in Hungary. By this, entire liberty of conscience was secured to all classes of the people. This lasted but little time. Treaties appear in Hungarian history merely an ingenious method of the Vienna cabinet for gaining time. Within twenty years after this second treaty, we find the same sad history going on again,—preachers forced from their pulpits, churches occupied by soldiers, peasants driven to mass at the bayonet's point, and the song of faith and undying hope raised by forlorn companies of martyrs on the bleak hill-sides, in forests, and in swamps. Forty Protestant clergymen sent at this time to the Spanish galleys at Naples, to labor as slaves, aroused the pity and indignation of Europe. It was that kind of persecution which is always the worst,—the persecution of race against race,—of the supple, subservient Austrian against the frank, independent Hungarian. To the honor of the Hungarian Catholics, it should be said that they stood by their countrymen, even of another faith, in those dark times, and made many efforts for their relief.

Under Maria Theresa again, with her many obligations to the Hungarian nation, the Protestants suffered new wrongs. Even their schools were closed by law. A letter written in 1751 by the brave old champion of Protestantism, Frederick the Great, to the Bishop of Breslau, undoubtedly helped these sufferers.

“You will no doubt have heard,” he says, “as we have done, what hard persecutions and troubles have for some time past fallen to the lot of the Protestants of both Confessions in Hungary; and how, contrary to treaties guaranteed by the mediation of foreign powers, one church after another has, on the most frivolous pretences,—indeed, on such pretences as ought to make every honest man ashamed,—been wrested from them.”

After a strong appeal against such proceedings, he closes thus:—

“Yes; they [the Roman Catholic clergy] should be brought to feel what a terrible retribution awaits their Church, if a time should come when the Protestant clergy should by Divine permission gain the

mastery, and the term *heretic* then be applied to the Roman Catholic, — what a terrible retribution awaits them if these same principles which are now published should then be acted on.”

Maria Theresa was succeeded by the Emperor Joseph, who, as a disciple of the philosophy of the eighteenth century, makes one think the better of the speculative belief, or non-belief, which could produce such noble toleration. In a letter addressed to the Prime Minister of France, in 1770, before his mounting the throne, he utters these frank words: —

“If I were once Emperor, you may reckon on my support and my approval of your plan of dissolving the order of Jesuits. You need not lay much stress on my mother; the affection for this order of monks is hereditary in the house of Hapsburg-Choiseul. I know these people well. I know their plans and exertions to spread darkness over the earth, and to rule all Europe from Cape Finisterre to the North Sea.”

In another letter he says: —

“Before they [the Jesuits] were known in Germany, religion brought with it happiness to the nations; they have sunk that hallowed name to be an object of detestation, and made it only a cloak for their covetousness and ambition. . . . It was their intolerance which brought on Germany the Thirty Years’ War. . . . If it were possible for me to hate, I must hate the men who persecuted Fénelon, and who procured the bull ‘*de Coenâ Domini*.’”

Under such an Emperor the Protestants naturally enjoyed peace. In 1781 he promulgated a remarkable edict of toleration, which would do honor to any age.

In the acts or constitutional provisions passed in 1790–91 may be found the *third guaranty* of the rights of the Protestant clergy of Hungary. By these, much liberty was allowed to this sect. But it was only as late as 1843–44 that marriages between Catholics and Protestants could be legally celebrated by Protestant clergymen.

Finally, in the Parliament of 1847–48, preceding the revolution, it was reserved to such men as Kossuth and Batthyanyi to establish the entire equality and freedom of all sects before the law. One project, however, of the liberal party — the union of the schools and churches with the state — was entirely rejected by the Protestant Church,

even as it had rejected similar proffers from the Austrian ministry.

We have touched but little on details in this brief sketch of the history of the Hungarian Protestant Church. Every year of its annals till the present century is marked with deeds of bloody violence against its faithful members and confessors. Its rights have been sanctioned by the solemn oath of the Hapsburg kings, and have been won by centuries of toil and suffering. The results are what we should expect after such a history. A pure and operative Christianity, freed from superstition on the one side and bigotry on the other, softened by many trials, endeared by the blood of noble men and women who have died for it, had sprung up on the Hungarian plains. Not much scepticism has ever been developed there. Possibly the mind of the nation is too practical, and too little abstract in its tendencies, to favor such a growth. Possibly real trials produce real faith. At least the traveller finds among that people more persons who manifest their religion in reverent worship, and in a useful, cheerful, practical piety, without denunciation or violence against other sects, than is usual in religious communities.

The great favoring influence toward the growth of this simple, practical piety has been, as we believe, the peculiar constitution of the Church. The Hungarian, in all his political and religious institutions, maintains firmly one principle,—the right of local self-government. Under his long experience of priestly rule, moreover, he has learned another lesson,—that the laity must share with the clergy in the government of the Church. On these two principles the whole Protestant Church-constitution is founded. The exact plan is not precisely similar to any one system of church government with us. It approximates to a union of the Presbyterian and Congregational systems. Every church or parish chooses its own preacher, dismisses him when it wishes, and manages its own parochial schools. Then there are a series of Assemblies, invested with a certain control over individual churches. First is the Assembly of the Seniors,—composed of preachers from several neighboring churches and of lay delegates from the congregations. This body decides on

certain parish and school matters, and is presided over by two members, chosen from among themselves, a Senior (a clergyman) and a Curator (a layman). Above this again is the Assembly of Superintendents, or Bishops, the highest church convention, which decides upon all the most important matters appertaining to the national Church. The "Superintendent" we have called a Bishop, though he maintains very little of the episcopal dignity. He is simply the superintendent of a large district of churches,—called a Seniorate,—containing, perhaps, several hundred thousand souls. His duty is to examine the candidates for the ministry, and to keep watch over the morals of the clergy. He is allowed from two hundred to three hundred dollars per annum for travelling expenses; but must be at the head of a congregation, and perform the usual duties of a clergyman. The great Assembly—that of the Superintendents—is composed of delegates from each congregation, and is presided over by two members, one a bishop, and the other (a layman) the Curator. In every business meeting, assembly, or synod of the Hungarian Church are always two presiding officers, one a layman and the other a clergyman. To the laymen are generally left the monetary affairs. The constitution varies somewhat under the different organizations of the Lutheran and the "Reformed." The choice of the preacher is in some of these determined almost entirely by the approval of the assembly; the assemblies themselves, too, have a greater or smaller proportion of lay members; but in the main the principles are the same throughout Hungary.

Such is the liberal, rational constitution of the Hungarian Church. It is such a church system as has everywhere nourished independent thought and earnest piety. In similar democratic and representative church bodies have Scottish freedom and energy developed themselves. Under like auspices Puritanism grew. The Pilgrim immigration, the New England colonies, American self-government, churches, colleges, and schools without number, are among the fair fruits of this polity.

Austrian despotism and Jesuitism have wisely aimed their blow at this system. Such an assault is consistent with the

spirit of Jesuitism. It is in perfect harmony with the course of the Roman Church towards the Lutheran and Reformed Churches, through the whole history of Austria.

Here we must say, while exposing this atrocious violation of treaties, and this insidious death-stroke to Protestant liberties in Hungary, that for our own part we join in no flippant and vulgar abuse of the Roman Catholic Church. The long line of noble martyrs in the early days of her history ; the heroic self-denial, the courage, the faith, the patience, the love, which in danger, in shipwreck, in pestilence, on the sea and on the land, among Christians and among Heathen, her confessors have shown ; the millions of human hearts which even now associate with her teachings all that is most tender and sacred in this life, and most cheering for the life to come, — allow towards her no haughty and contemptuous words of common reviling. The church which has sheltered under its time-worn arches Columbus and Xavier, Pascal and Fénelon, Madame Guyon and Cheverus, even in its dishonored ruin, should be approached with reverence. No church represents its Master. We do not love Protestantism for its name. We do not believe that it contains all of human worth and piety. Nor do we believe that it presents the ideal of a pure, practical Christianity. But, just as we accept sects, — each representing a portion of Christ's body, each an individual and temporary embodiment of the universal Christianity, — for the sake of the fulness of life and belief into which at last through such helps we are to come, — so we accept Protestantism. It is not Christianity to us ; it is not religion. The day will arrive when the good which mingles with the evil in Romanism, and the good which mingles with the evil in Protestantism, shall unite in the universal and Christian good. But till then, with all charity, we believe that what there is best in the world of free thought, of independence, of intelligence, of devotion to liberal principles, of that spirituality which looks away from the technical and ceremonial, and binds itself to the love of the Infinite God as manifested in Jesus Christ, is to be found most abundantly within the boundaries of the Protestant Church.

The fatal blow to Protestantism in Eastern Europe has been struck within the last three years. So quietly has the thrust been dealt, that only a few, comparatively, in this country, are aware that the deed is done. And yet to a reflective mind such acts of legislation are far more terrible than sudden and isolated acts of cruelty.

The travellers in Hungary within the last ten years relate mournful stories of her condition. They describe their journey as saddened by the ruins of blackened homesteads and wasted towns; they visit families, where father and brother have been cut off by the hand of the executioner; they talk in the prisons with the clergymen, patriots, and statesmen, whose only crime is that they loved their country too well; they hear everywhere the sigh for deliverance, or the hopeless groan of a conquered people. But even these sad scenes and discouragements make less impression on us than the accounts of this last effort at oppression by Austrian Jesuitism.

The act to which we refer is the *CONCORDAT*, the new union of the Pope and the Austrian Emperor, formed on the 5th of November, 1855. To this *Concordat* there were certain introductory acts which should be briefly mentioned. As has already been shown, the superintendents or bishops had always, through the whole existence of the Hungarian Protestant Church, been chosen by the districts. In 1850, Haynau, a man whose name is on the pillory of the world for brutality and cruelty, himself appointed four new bishops. These tools of the ministry are still in power, paid by the government. At the same time all the General Assemblies and Synods of the Protestant Church were abolished. In 1854, District Assemblies were allowed to meet, but under a Romanist moderator, appointed by the court. Those officers found in Hungarian history so useful to the freedom of the Church — the lay moderators of the meetings — were entirely superseded. The district inspectors were suspended. The object was gradually to merge the self-government of the Church into the ecclesiastical government centring in Vienna. How well this has been accomplished the *Concordat* will show.

But the great step of all was to get possession of the Prot-

estant schools. Accordingly a law was passed "reorganizing" the schools and colleges of Hungary, and placing at a higher standard the salaries of the Professors. It was skilfully framed, and ostensibly prepared with the purpose of reform. The effect was, that the chairs of Divinity and Law had at once to be given up in some of the Protestant colleges, and the students of course were obliged to resort to Vienna, or to the Catholic University of Pesth.

The necessity, too, of reforming, within a given time, so many schools, and increasing so many salaries, was, as the ministry well knew, an immense burden to the Protestant congregations. They were all poor after the revolution. The Austrian currency was depreciated some thirty per cent; and it became almost impossible within many parishes to raise the requisite funds, while neither teachers nor people desired the additional expense. In consequence, many schools have fallen into the hands of the Jesuits, or were suspended as purely private schools, and the danger now is that many more will meet with a like fate. The board of instruction, too, the school inspectors, are now all Catholic. The new teachers, as far as possible, are chosen from among the Romanists. The books are selected from those that will please despotism and Jesuitry. Roman Catholic children are not allowed to enter Protestant schools, and the lectures and lessons must never be such as will plant free ideas, or illustrate Hungarian or Protestant history.

The first article in the new conspiracy against liberty between the Pope and the Austrian Emperor, dated as if in derision on the day celebrated in England as the day of deliverance from Popish plots, the 5th of November, reads thus:—

"The Holy Roman Catholic religion shall ever be maintained in the empire of Austria, and in all its dependencies, with all those rights and privileges which, by the ordinance of God and the laws of the Church, it *ought* to enjoy."

That is, not the laws of the country, but the laws of Rome, are to determine the rights of the Church. In other words, "the privilege" or "the right" of persecuting heretics, of forbidding heretical books, of chaining the press, and stopping

the free tongue, is to be allowed to the priests in Hungary, even as in Rome.

The second article asserts : —

“ As the Roman Pope has, by Divine law, the primacy of honor and jurisdiction through the whole pale of the Church, so the direct communication between the bishops, the clergy, the people, and the papal chair, in all spiritual and clerical matters, is a necessity. This communication has not, therefore, in future to depend on the ruler of the country, but is to be completely free.”

In other words, the Pope is to govern on the Danube as he governs on the Tiber. Even the Emperor of Austria himself is nothing where this jurisdiction comes in. Spain, even under Philip II., never succumbed to so despotic a spiritual power. No other Catholic country in Europe now, unless it be the kingdom of Naples, would submit a day to it.

The third article gives the bishops complete authority of every kind over the clergy ; and the fourth puts the bishops under the Pope. The fifth article gives the bishops control of all the schools, public and private ; and the sixth secures to them alone the power of appointing and removing the professors of theology. By the seventh, Catholic professors can alone be appointed for the Gymnasia, and the bishops are to decide on the religious books for those institutions. The eighth provides that the schools shall be under priestly superintendence, and even the inspector appointed by the Emperor must be from among the candidates proposed by the bishop. The ninth article runs thus : —

“ Archbishops, bishops, and all ordinaries, will freely exercise the power they possess, to point out as dangerous the books which are injurious to true religion and morality, and to *avert true believers* from reading them. The government will take proper measures for preventing such books from being spread over the empire.”

Thus quietly in this nineteenth century is extinguished the liberty of a religious press and a free Bible in the empire of Austria.

The tenth article establishes ecclesiastical courts for the punishment of the clergy. The sixteenth pledges the whole power of the empire to assist the bishops in the punishment

of "contempt, by word, deed, or writing, of the faith, liturgy, and institutions of the Roman Catholic Church." The closing articles (thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth) provide that "everything not settled in the treaty, pertaining to ecclesiastical matters, shall be arranged according to the doctrines and discipline of the Church"; that "all laws and ordinances hitherto in force in Austria or the provinces, contrary to this Concordat, are abrogated"; and that "this treaty shall be henceforth the law of the land."

This is the *Concordat*, the new union of Romish Jesuitism and Austrian tyranny. It seems at first sight a spurious document. We might well suppose it some musty treaty, framed in the palmy days of the Inquisition, just brought out from the dusty archives of Simancas or the library of the Vatican. Not the threats of excommunication and interdict, nor the bulls of proud pontiffs, nor the public sentiment of the world, ever degraded a European king in the Middle Age beneath the feet of the Pope, as this young Emperor now voluntarily humbles himself before the clergy of Rome. And to strike such a league and promulgate such principles *now*! — in this age, when free thought is striding unceasingly forward, when science reigns, when revolutions are thundering at every palace-gate, and when independence in religion has become a doctrine, allowed even by tyrants! By this treaty and the orders of council of 1850, the old self-governing constitution of the Hungarian Church ceases to exist; the colleges, the seminaries, the schools, of Protestant congregations become, in whole or in part, the schools of Jesuits and priests; the literature, the teachers, the ceremonials, of the country become Romanist; the Bible is put under censorship, and its circulation fettered; and, not least significant and appalling, the Catholics of Hungary, who have never been bitterly opposed to the Protestants, who have kept themselves independent of Rome, and who always preferred liberty to bigotry, are placed under the immediate and unrestrained control of the papal ordinances and ministers.

This remarkable effort of the Austrian cabinet is undoubtedly not altogether or principally dictated by religious motives. Count Thun, one of the ministry, is a bigoted Catholic. But

with the Emperor and the rest of the cabinet, the object of this extraordinary humiliation before the papal chair is political. They hope to counterbalance France in Catholic Italy, and to win the Roman Catholic world in their favor. They would strengthen themselves against revolution by appealing to superstition.

It is good that even from Roman Catholic Europe a groan of contempt has arisen at such humiliating meanness before a petty priest, and such gigantic falseness towards a conquered country. Even Austrian Lombardy rejects the Concordat with loathing; the German papers cry out against it; Belgium utters its condemnation; and from spirited little Sardinia and Piedmont we need no words, — they are showing by most significant legislation what they think of Concordats, and of dependence on either temporal or spiritual power at Rome.

It is possible that this one act of tyranny of Austria may do more to emancipate Germany, by the reaction it occasions, than all the efforts of the whole Liberal party. But it is a gigantic wrong. The books of judgment in the world's annals are black with the records of the crimes of Austria. As we recall her history, there seems to move before us, coming forth from the night of the past, a long procession of her victims, calling for vengeance upon her. The princes of Poland, with faces noble yet tearful, in inconsolable grief over liberty crushed, and an ancient kingdom destroyed; — the pale reformers and confessors of Bohemia, asking of God, as they asked on the rack and at the stake, "*How long?*" — the sad and noble men, the poets, the artists, the patriots of Italy, who bled in vain for an emancipated country; — the heroic chieftains, the unknown peasants of Hungary, mourning for a beloved people blotted out from the list of nations; — the martyrs, the sufferers for liberty and for conscience, without number and without name, from the rack, the gallows, the scaffold, the cell, from a thousand battle-fields and dungeons, — a vast cloud of witnesses, — swell the curse of mankind against the old oppressor of liberty. But more than all her crimes, the most terrible of all her accusers, will be this last deed against the Church of God in Hungary.